PRESIDENT

HO CHI MINH

ANSWERS

PRESIDENT

L.B. JOHNSON

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FOREIGN LANGUAGES PUBLISHING HOUSE

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PUBLISHER'S NOTE

In early February 1967, *a representative of the United States in Moscow asked for a meeting with a representative of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam to whom he handed over a letter from President L. B. Johnson to President Ho Chi Minh.**

On February 15, 1967, *the representative of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam handed over President Ho Chi Minh's reply to the representative of the United States.*

Herein we publish President Ho Chi Minh's reply along with our commentary and a letter to the President of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam from Dr Nguyen Huu Tho, President of the Presidium of the South Vietnam National Front for Liberation.

The present booklet, we believe, will help the reader to better understand the viewpoint of the Vietnamese people and that of the aggressor against whom they are fighting for their independence and for peace.

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* See Appendix

President HO CHI MINH'S Reply to U.S. President LYNDON B. JOHNSON

TO HIS EXCELLENCY MR LYNDON B. JOHNSON,
PRESIDENT,
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Your Excellency,

On February 10, 1967, I received your message. This is my reply.

Vietnam is thousands of miles away from the United States. The Vietnamese people have never done any harm to the United States. But contrary to the pledges made by its representative at the 1954 Geneva Conference, the U.S. Government has ceaselessly intervened in Vietnam, it has unleashed and intensified the war of aggression in South Vietnam with a view to prolonging the partition of Vietnam and turning South Vietnam into a neo-colony

and a military base of the United States. For over two years now, the U.S. Goverment has, with its air and naval forces, carried the war to the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, an independent and sovereign country.

The U.S. Government has committed war crimes, crimes against peace and against mankind. In South Vietnam, half a million U.S. and satellite troops have resorted to the most inhuman weapons and the most barbarous methods of warfare, such as napalm, toxic chemicals and gases, to massacre our compatriots, destroy crops, and raze villages to the ground. In North Vietnam, thousands of U.S. aircraft have dropped hundreds of thousands of tons of bombs, destroying towns, villages, factories, roads, bridges, dykes, dams, and even churches, pagodas, hospitals, schools. In your message, you apparently deplored the sufferings and destructions in Vietnam. May I ask you: Who has perpetrated these monstrous crimes? It is the U.S. and satellite troops. The U.S. Government is entirely responsible for the extremely serious situation in Vietnam.

The U.S. war of aggression against the Vietnamese people constitutes a challenge to the countries of the socialist camp, a threat to the national independence movement, and a serious danger to peace in Asia and the world.

The Vietnamese people deeply love independence, freedom and peace. But in the face of the U.S. aggression, they have risen up, united as one man, fearless of sacrifices and hardships; they are determined to carry on their Resistance until they have won genuine independence and freedom and true peace. Our just cause enjoys strong sympathy and support from the peoples of the whole world including broad sections of the American people.

The U.S. Government has unleashed the war of aggression in Vietnam. It must cease this aggression. That is the only way to the restoration of peace. The U.S. Government must stop definitively and unconditionally its bombing raids and all other acts of war against the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, withdraw from South Vietnam all U.S. and satellite troops, recognize the South Vietnam National Front for Liberation, and let the Vietnamese people settle themselves their own affairs. Such is the basic content of the four-point stand of the Government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, which embodies the essential principles and provisions of the 1954 Geneva Agreements on Vietnam. It is the basis of a correct political solution to the Vietnam problem.

In your message, you suggested direct talks between the Democratic Republic of Vietnam

and the United States. If the U.S. Government really wants these talks, it must first of all stop unconditionally its bombing raids and all other acts of war against the Democratic Republic of Vietnam. It is only after the unconditional cessation of the U.S. bombing raids and all other acts of war against the Democratic Republic of Vietnam that the Democratic Republic of Vietnam and the United States could enter into talks and discuss questions concerning the two sides.

The Vietnamese people will never submit to force; they will never accept talks under the threat of bombs.

Our cause is absolutely just. It is to be hoped that the U.S. Government will act in accordance with reason.

Sincerely,

HO CHI MINH

Letter to President HO CHI MINH
by Dr NGUYEN HUU THO

President, Central Committee Presidium,
South Vietnam National Front for Liberation

Esteemed President,

On behalf of the fourteen million South Vietnamese and the South Vietnam National Front for Liberation, I would like to express to you and our Northern kith and kin the deep emotion of the South Vietnamese armed forces and people on hearing your reply to U.S. President Johnson.

Your letter voices the deep hatred of our entire people for the aggressors. It brings in full relief the just stand for independence and peace as well as the indomitable spirit of our whole nation; it is a stern reply to the insolent attitude of the U.S. chief aggressor who

has gone the length of laying down conditions to our people. Your letter is a hammer blow at the U.S. warmongers, foiling their "peace" swindle, causing bewilderment and embarrassment to them while inspiring our people throughout the country and winning more support for our just cause from the world peoples.

The South Vietnamese armed forces and people, highly satisfied and enthusiastic, wish to express to you and their brothers and sisters in the North their absolute confidence, their profound gratitude and iron-like determination to respond to the call of the Fatherland—push forward our sacred war against U.S. aggression for national salvation till complete victory.

The U.S. imperialists have been sustaining repeated and heavy defeats in both parts of our country and are severely condemned by world public opinion. Nevertheless, bellicose and obdurate by nature, they do not want to give up their dark design of aggression.

In South Vietnam they are throwing all the American, puppet and satellite troops into terrorist raids, massacring our countrymen in rural and urban areas, in the hills and the plains, even in the demilitarized zone, piling up their crimes against our people.

In the North, they have stepped up war escalation to an ever more serious degree, intensified attacks on various industrial centres, towns and other populated

areas, dropped mines into rivers and canals, and used naval and ground artillery to fire at the the territory of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam.

Johnson and his associates have just held a conference in Guam to devise measures for the intensification and expansion of their aggressive war against our country. Yet, they continue reiterating their protestations of "peace" in an attempt to deceive public opinion. But how can they conceal their dark design of stepping up their aggression in the South, intensiying the war of destruction in the North to cow our people into submission, and realize their plot to bring the South under their domination, permanently partition our beautiful country, and sabotage peace and security in Indochina and Asia.

The whole armed forces and people of South Vietnam, boiling with hatred for the U.S. aggressors, are of one mind with their compatriots in the North. They are resolute to translate your words into brilliant deeds and to make the Johnson clique understand that the use of armed force to subdue such a heroic people as ours will bring them nowhere.

There is only one way for them to avoid ignominious failure, that is, to stop aggression, end their air raids and all other acts of war against the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, withdraw all American and

satellite troops from South Vietnam, recognize the South Vietnam National Front for Liberation as the only genuine representative of the South Vietnamese people and let the Vietnamese people settle themselves their own affairs.

The South Vietnamese armed forces and people, who are enjoying wholehearted assistance from their countrymen in the North and sympathy and support from the people all over the world, have been recording great victories, dealing repeated hammer blows at the U.S. aggressors and their henchmen. In their irresistible march toward final victory, the armed forces and people of South Vietnam will surely mete out still heavier punishment to the U.S. aggressors for each step of their war escalation. They are ready to foil all the new plans of the U.S. aggressors and will drive them out of our country.

We promise to you and our compatriots in the North that, however frenzied the U.S. imperialists may be, and whatever brutal means they may use, the armed forces and people of South Vietnam, under the leadership of the National Front for Liberation, will fulfil their pledge never to shrink before difficulties and sacrifices, and will fight shoulder to shoulder with their Northern brothers and sisters through to the end with the determination to accomplish as best they can the sacred task

of liberating the South defending the North, in advance toward national reunification.

Please accept the most respectful greetings from the entire people and liberation armed forces of South Vietnam.

South Vietnam, March 24, 1967

Right in the first linesof his letter to President Ho Chi Minh, President L.B. Johnson deliberately erased the line between the aggressor and the victim of aggression. He brazenly said that "we both have a heavy obligation", and pretended to sorrow at the war calamities in Vietnam. The whole world knows that it is the United States administration, it is Johnson himself, who, in violation of the solemn pledge made by the United States delegate at the 1954 Conference on Indochina, have sent American and satellite troops to South Vietnam, and ordered American aircraft and warships to attack North Vietnam, perpetrating monstrous crimes against the people in both parts of our country. The American people are also aware that it is Johnson, who has pushed

tens of thousands of American youths on to the path of death to carry out the sinister aggressive designs of the United States administration. And he, whose hands are stained with blood, spoke of humanity!

The truth is as clear as daylight. The United States has dispatched its troops to invade Vietnam and used bombs, bullets and toxic chemicals to sow destructions on the Vietnamese soil daily and hourly. As President Ho Chi Minh has pointed out, *"the U.S. Government has committed war crimes, crimes against peace and against mankind"*, and *"the U.S. Government is entirely responsible for the extremely serious situation in Vietnam"*.

The Vietnamese people do not encroach upon an inch of the United States territory. They are only waging a self-defence struggle on their own land. They are resolved to defeat the American aggressors for the sake of their own existence. They thereby also discharge their responsibilities toward the national liberation movement of the oppressed peoples, toward the defence of the socialist camp of which their country is a member, and the safeguarding of peace in Southeast Asia and the world. Johnson's contention that "we both have a heavy obligation" means that he wants to put the aggressor and the victim of aggression on the same footing in order to defend his gangster's viewpoint in the settlement of the Vietnam problem.

Johnson also claimed that he had made "efforts" over the past several years to attain a "peaceful settlement" of the Vietnam issue, and that "these

efforts had not achieved any results." But what is the truth? The truth is that in the last two years Johnson has constantly paid lip service to "peace" while escalating very quickly and frantically. Since he began his "peace negotiations" hoax in his Baltimore speech in April 1965, the United States administration has raised the strength of its expeditionary force in South Vietnam from 50,000 to over 420,000 men (more than eightfold), and escalated its air war from the 17th parallel to all parts of North Vietnam, attacking bridges, villages, pagodas, churches, hospitals, dams, industrial centres, and major cities including Hanoi — capital of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam.

Every time Johnson prepared for new escalation steps, he invariably talked of "peace" to cover up his and the United States administration's crimes and fool public opinion.

Right after sending his letter to President Ho Chi Minh, he made three new successive escalation steps by launching large-scale military operations in South Vietnam, and resuming the bombing of North Vietnam even before the Lunar New Year cease-fire ordered by the South Vietnam National Front for Liberation came to an end; secondly, by using artillery based south of the demilitarized zone and on American warships to shell North Vietnam and dropping mines into its rivers and canals; and thirdly, by intensifying and expanding attacks on industrial centres of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, such as Vietri, Thainguyen, Hongai, Haiphong and bombing places along the Red River inside Hanoi.

A few days back, Johnson summoned his associates and Saigon henchmen to Guam for a "war council" meeting to speed up the aggression against Vietnam. The Western press has disclosed that the United States would "step up military pressure on the North", "add more targets to those already under attack in North Vietnam", "bring in another 40,000-50,000 men apart from 470,000 planned for 1967", "introduce troops into the Mekong delta" "give Westmoreland more responsibilities and an enlarged staff", etc. A communique was issued, claiming however that Washington would continue the earnest search for peace in Vietnam!

Washington responsible representatives have again and again repeated the word "peace" but theirs is a sham peace. Because while doing so they go on attacking the Democratic Republic of Vietnam with greater intensity. Because far from withdrawing American and satellite troops from South Vietnam, they keep increasing them. Because they persist in refusing to recognize the South Vietnam National Front for Liberation — their opponent — who has inflicted upon them heavy defeats on the battlefield, and is the real master of the situation in South Vietnam. Because they continue trampling upon the sacred national rights of the Vietnamese people, refusing to let them settle themselves their internal affairs.

It is crystal-clear that the path being followed by the U.S. administration is that of war and aggression.

In his letter President Ho Chi Minh has clearly shown the only way to peace in Vietnam. He said,

"The U.S. Government has unleashed the war of aggression in Vietnam. It must cease this aggression. That is the only way to the restoration of peace. The U.S. Government must stop definitively and unconditionally its bombing raids and all other acts of war against the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, withdraw from South Vietnam all American and satellite troops, recognize the South Vietnam National Front for Liberation, let the Vietnamese people settle themselves their own affairs. Such is the basic content of the four-point stand of the Government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, which embodies the essential principles and provisions of the 1954 *Geneva Agreements on Vietnam. It is the basis of a correct political solution to the Vietnam problem."*

The United States administration, however, is stubbornly opposing the just stand of the Government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam. The very condition laid down by Johnson for an end to the bombing of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam shows his utter obduracy and impudence.

Without calling it by name — and everyone understands why — Johnson demanded reciprocity, claiming that in return for an "order" on his part of "a cessation of the bombing against your country and the stopping of further augmentation of U.S. forces in South Vietnam" the people in North Vietnam should not support their Southern compatriots in resisting U.S. aggression.

That is indeed utter absurdity. The United States has no right whatsoever to bomb the Democratic Republic of Vietnam — an independent and sovereign country — and consequently, has no right to

put any condition whatsoever to its bombing. It has no right to send an expeditionary force to commit aggression against South Vietnam, and must bring it home unconditionally. Washington, however, does not only refuse to withdraw its troops, but cynically lays down conditions for the "stopping of further augmentation of U.S. forces in South Vietnam". To accept the reciprocity proposed by Johnson would amount to allowing him freely to use a tremendous war machine comprising more than one million American, puppet and satellite troops to massacre our countrymen in the South while their brothers and sisters in the North should stand by with folded arms, refraining from helping them in their self-defence struggle. That is a gangster's logic.

In fact, the United States administration's claim for reciprocity constitutes the condensed and most brazen expression of their aggressive stand and deceitful "peace" manœuvre. It is also a perfidious trick aimed at covering up new acts of war escalation.

On the other hand, Washington spread rumours about "existing contacts" between it and Hanoi to generate the belief that actual talks took place while American aircraft continued bombing North Vietnam. Obviously, this was intended to placate and mislead public opinion, thereby creating favourable conditions for the United States to make further escalation steps in its attempt to force the Vietnamese people into accepting its own terms by means of bombs and bullets.

Moreover, Johnson posed conditions to the "extension of the Tet truce" on the occasion of the Lunar New Year Festival and set a time-limit for a response from Hanoi. This is obviously an ultimatum. Our people who under bombs and bullets do not submit to the aggressor will not be intimidated by such a threat.

For the Vietnamese people as well as for the peace- and justice- loving peoples all over the world, the only sensible reciprocity in the Vietnam problem is that the United States who has started aggression must stop it. It stands to reason that they have to fight resolutely against the invaders until they drive them out of their country. That is our response to Washington's ultimatum.

President Ho Chi Minh has clearly stated: "*The Vietnamese people deeply love independence, freedom and peace. But in the face of the U.S. aggression, they have risen up, united as one man, fearless of sacrifices and hardships; they are determined to carry on their Resistance until they have won genuine independence and freedom and true peace.*"

The Vietnamese people will resolutely materialize these words and are firmly confident that they shall defeat the American aggressors militarily and break their will of aggression. They are confident— as their own experience has amply testified — that the longer they fight the greater successes they will achieve, and that final victory will be theirs.

APPENDIX

U.S. President LYNDON B. JOHNSON'S Message to President HO CHI MINH

HIS EXCELLENCY HO CHI MINH,
PRESIDENT,
DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM

Dear Mr. President,

I am writing to you in the hope that the conflict in Vietnam can be brought to an end. The conflict has already taken a heavy toll — in lives lost, in wounds inflicted, in property destroyed, and in simple human misery. If we fail to find a just and peaceful solution, history will judge us harshly.

Therefore, I believe that we both have a heavy obligation to seek earnestly the path to peace. It is in response to that obligation that I am writing directly to you. We have tried over the past several years, in a variety of ways and through a number of channels, to convey to you and your colleagues our desire to achieve a peaceful settlement. For whatever reasons, these efforts have not achieved any results.

It may be that our thoughts and yours, our attitudes and yours, have been distorted or misinterpreted as they passed through these various channels. Certainly that is always a danger in indirect communication.

There is one good way to overcome this problem and to move forward in the search for a peaceful settlement. That is for us to arrange for direct talks between trusted representatives in a secure setting and away from the glare of publicity. Such talks should not be used as a propaganda exercise but should be a serious effort to find a workable and mutually acceptable solution.

In the past two weeks, I have noted public statements by representatives of your government suggesting that you would be prepared to enter into direct bilateral talks with representatives of the U.S. Government, provided that we ceased "unconditionally" and permanently our bombing operations against your country and all military actions against it. In the last days, serious and responsible parties have assured us indirectly that this is in fact your proposal.

Let me frankly state that I see two great difficulties with this proposal. In view of your public position, such action on our part would inevitably produce worldwide speculation that discussions were under way and would impair the privacy and secrecy of those discussions. Secondly, there would inevitably be grave concern on our part whether your government would make use of such action by us to improve its military position.

With these problems in mind, I am prepared to move even further toward an ending of the hostilities than your government has proposed in either public statements or through private diplomatic channels. I am prepared to order a cessation of bombing against your country and the stopping of further augmentation of U.S. forces in South Vietnam as soon as I am assured that infiltration into South Vietnam by land and by sea has stopped. These acts of restraint on both side would, I believe, make it possible for us to conduct serious and private discussions leading toward an early peace.

I make this proposal to you now with a specific sense of urgency arising from the imminent New Year holidays in Vietnam. If you are able to accept this proposal I see no reason why it could not take effects at the end of the New Year, or Têt, holidays. The proposal I have made would be greatly strengthened if your military authorities and those of the government of South Vietnam could promptly negotiate an extension of the Têt truce.

As to the site of the bilateral discussions I propose, there are several possibilities. We could, for example, have our representatives meet in Moscow where contacts have already occurred. They could meet in some other country such as Burma. You may have other arrangements or sites in mind, and I would try to meet your suggestions.

The important thing is to end a conflict that has brought burdens to both our peoples, and above all to the people of South Vietnam. If you have any thoughts about the actions I propose, it would be most important that I receive them as soon as possible.

Sincerely,

LYNDON B. JOHNSON

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